

# Illuminations

## Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Sheila McGinn

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This summer, the Department of Theology and Religious Studies welcomed Dr. Sheila McGinn into her new position as Department Chair. *Illuminations* staff saw this transition as an opportunity to sit down with Dr. McGinn in order to learn more about her and her plans for the Department.

Born in Iowa and raised in the Twin Cities, McGinn moved to Chicago after high school to attend Northwestern University. She intended to double major in chemistry and psychology, but a core class titled "Man and Religion," altered her plans. McGinn recalls being in a classroom with one hundred and fifty other students and being one of two students who laughed at the jokes her outrageous professor made. The reading, assignments, and thinking required in the field fascinated her and McGinn quickly abandoned her pre-med plans to study something that was much more fun.

After leaving Chicago briefly to complete an M.A. program at the University of Dallas, she returned to do her Ph.D work through a combined program at Garrett and Northwestern. McGinn's interests lie in early Christian and Patristic studies as well as Biblical studies, predominately New Testament. She wrote her dissertation on an obscure second century group called the Montanists.



## Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Sheila McGinn (Continued)

***You can always read books and write papers, but this is one opportunity where you can get to know the faculty and get real mentoring and advice.***

After graduation, McGinn got a job teaching at Mundelein College in Chicago until, when she was one year short of tenure, Mundelein was bought by Loyola University Chicago. Although reluctant to leave Chicago, McGinn began job hunting and came across a job description for a position at JCU from Dr. Joe Kelly. While she was in graduate school, McGinn had met Kelly through the Patristic Society and he had encouraged McGinn to begin publishing.

Although she was hesitant about Cleveland, McGinn recalled the caliber of Kelly's work, and applied and visited John Carroll. She was instantly impressed by the University, the resources available to her, and the collection in the library. She knew that such a supportive environment, especially for a female, was rare in her field.

When asked what she has appreciated most about JCU, McGinn recalls enjoying recent, top notch, graduate students with interests in research and writing. McGinn says, "It's fun to watch when students are able to go from here and make a mark somewhere in the real world."

As for her plans for the Department, McGinn would like to bring more visibility to the Theology and Religious Studies program. She mentions two things in particular she would like to see recognized better by the University as a whole: the achievements of her colleagues in the Department and the personal attention that students receive in the graduate program.

McGinn has published several books and articles on Pauline studies, early Christianity, and the role of women in the New Testament. Recently, she has taught Introduction to Biblical Interpretation, Pauline Literature, New Testament Introduction and the Theology and Religious Studies Senior Seminar. On top of research, teaching, and acting as Department Chair, McGinn is also heavily involved in the Society of Biblical Literature. She is the out-going Regional Secretary and serves on two steering committees: the Computer Assisted Research Section and the Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity Section. For the Eastern Great Lakes region, she is the general editor of the academic journal affiliated with the organization. Finally, McGinn is active in the Women's Caucus, an unofficial group that advocates for women and minorities in the Society.

McGinn urges graduate students to remember that their most important resources at JCU are the human resources, namely, the faculty in the Department and the research faculty in the library. She says, "You can always read books and write papers, but this is one opportunity where you can get to know the faculty and get real mentoring and advice."

## Welcome, Dr. David Barr

### Spring 2012 Tuohy Chair

John Carroll University's Theology and Religious Studies Department is pleased to welcome Dr. David Barr as this Spring's holder of the Walter and Mary Tuohy Chair of Interreligious Dialogue. Dr. Barr comes to us from Wright State University in Dayton, OH where he is a Professor of Religion in the Department of Religion, Philosophy, and Classics.



Dr. Barr received his Ph.D from Florida State University and the majority of his research is focused on the Book of Revelation and other New Testament topics. He has written and edited several books and articles on these topics, including the recent *New Testament Story: An Introduction* and *Tales of the End: A Narrative Commentary on the Book of Revelation*.

Dr. Barr will teach a course called "Reading the Apocalypse of John," which attempts to determine what constitutes a proper or erroneous reading of the Book of Revelation. The class will both listen to what the book has to say and ask questions of it. The goal is to try to understand what the book can tell us about the lives of the real men and women for whom it was written.

In addition to this class, Dr. Barr will be delivering a weekly lecture series on Tuesday evenings in Donahue Auditorium. The series, "Jerusalem, Jesus, and Jihad: End-Times Scenarios in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam," begins on March 12th and ends on April 16th.

Dr. Barr describes the lecture series thus: "Judaism, Christianity, and Islam share much, including the feeling that we live in an imperfect world, dangling between an idealized beginning and an imagined end. Indeed, they share many details beginning with Adam and ending with the Day of Judgment, with two of them positing the return of Jesus at the end. But these commonalities produce radically different visions in the present, both between and within these traditions. This series presents a broad overview of the End-times in these three religions—their common origins, parallel developments, and modern manifestations. Along the way we will encounter (and try to understand) such controversial topics as the role of Satan, the practice of Jihad, and the meaning of the Second coming for each tradition."

## A New Cloud of Witnesses: The Laity 50 Years After Vatican

On October 5-7, John Carroll University, in collaboration with the Cardinal Suenens Center and the Jack and Mary Jane Breen Chair in Catholic Systematic Theology, hosted a conference to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council. The conference reflected on Vatican II's vision for a more active and engaged laity and, through presentations from prominent lay men and women, sparked conversations, hope, and opportunity for participants. Many graduate students, especially those enrolled in Dr. Hahnenberg's "What Happened at Vatican II" course, attended the conference.



Conference participants



Conference participants

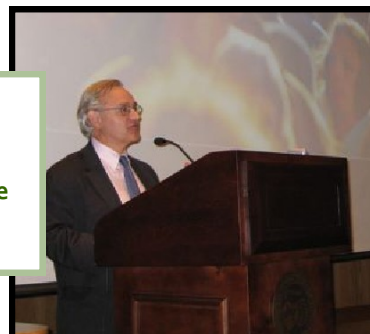
On Friday evening, **Doris Donnelly** gave a warm welcome to all the attendees and presented a talk about Cardinal Suenens' dream. As one of the most influential bishops at the Second Vatican Council, Suenens, at the invitation of Pope John XXIII, set the agenda and tone for the last three periods of the Council. Donnelly was followed by **John Allen Jr.**, senior Vatican correspondent for the National Catholic Reporter and CNN. In his talk, Allen reflected on the Church fifty years after Vatican II by presenting the challenges of taking the "pulse" of the Catholic Church, current trends in the role of the laity, and the reasons for hope for the Church's future.

The conference continued on Saturday morning with **Margaret O'Brien Steinfels**, who drew upon her work over many decades as writer, editor, and commentator, and as co-director of the Fordham University Center on Religion and Culture. Her presentation focused on some major outcomes of Vatican II for the laity, religious women, and priests. She challenged the audience to consider the religious, social, political, and economic changes in America before, during and since the Second Vatican Council, emphasizing the need to "live in solidarity with the past and present." Next, **Edward Hahnenberg**, holder of the Breen Chair in Systematic Theology at John Carroll University, presented his research on lay ministry and his prediction for its evolution in the next fifty years. His talk highlighted some of the trends in lay ministry in the history of Christianity and some of his hopes for the future where he believes, "God can do something new."



Dr. Hahnenberg

E.J. Dionne



After lunch, participants attended two of three break-out sessions: "Modern Family" by **Natalie Weaver**; "On Being the Church You Want to See" by **Kerry Robinson**; and "Reading the Signs of the Times or Following the Trends on Twitter: The Next Generation of Catholic Laity" by **Brian Sinchak**. Following a Eucharistic service at Church of the Gesu, **E.J. Dionne**, nationally known political commentator, spoke on the Catholic Vote in his talk, "In God We Trust." He stressed the importance of Catholics on both sides dialoguing with one another to decrease polarization.





Participant  
browsing books

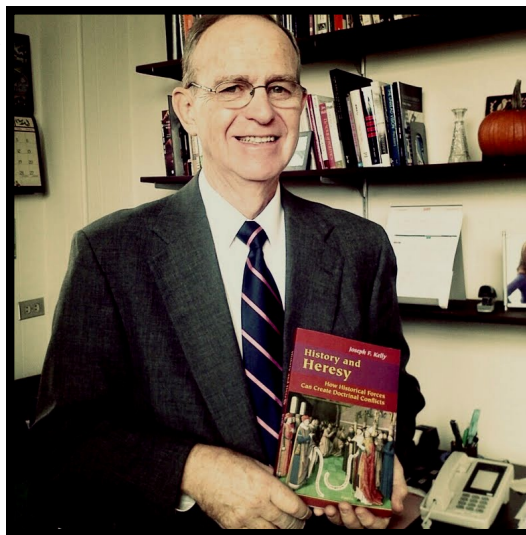
The final speaker for the weekend was **Richard Gaillardetz**, who received a standing ovation after his talk on the need for the Church to create a “non-competitive theology,” something he believes was encouraged by Vatican II. In Gaillardetz’ opinion, “either/or” theology is polarizing and we need to focus more on areas of agreement.

Participants at the conference were impressed by the quality of the presenters and excited to continue conversations sparked by topics brought up by the talks. Reflecting on the weekend, graduate student Amy McKenna says, “The conference was much more than I expected. The insight that I drew from each talk was that as long as meaningful conversation continues, we will still be in the spirit of Vatican II.” The conference allowed participants to reflect on how much has changed since the Second Vatican Council, the state of the Church today, and hopeful possibilities for the future.

## Faculty Author: Dr. Joseph Kelly

In Early October, Dr. Joseph Kelly celebrated the publication of his fifteenth book, *History and Heresy*. The book looks at heresies and the historical forces that shaped them. Dr. Kelly studies the people and historical events that influenced how the Church understood orthodoxy and heresy, everywhere demonstrating the importance of historical context for such interpretation. One of the first to read the new book, recent graduate Shannon Edwards offers the following evaluation:

“Dr. Kelly’s *History and Heresy* is not your average church history book. While packed with important information, the book colloquially narrates the stories of the people who have been historically identified as heretics. After reading the accounts of their lives and sometimes deaths, one may question whether the punishments for heresy actually fit the theological crimes. *History and Heresy* gives the reader an unexpected look at the lesser known and often forgotten parts of the process of determining and maintaining church orthodoxy.”



## UPCOMING COURSES

Spring 2013

### **RL 430—Introduction to Systematic Theology** (Dr. Joan Nuth, meets Tuesdays 6:30-9:15)

How does theology work? Is theology something we do—a verb as well as a noun? Does it change over time? This course studies key concepts necessary for the doing of theology: faith, revelation, scripture, symbol, tradition, community, and method. As we examine each of these, we will look at the theology created by a 14th-century woman mystic, Julian of Norwich, and a 20th-century Jesuit, Karl Rahner, in order to explore how they organize their theological “systems” and why they do so.

### **RL 538—Sacraments** (Dr. Doris Donnelly, meets Mondays 6:30-9:15)

Poets, psychologists, anthropologists and philosophers have long been familiar with the power of symbols to work mysteriously on human consciousness so as to suggest more than what meets the eye or ear. This course explores the power of symbols to penetrate the reality of the life, death and resurrection of Christ so intensely that something new happens in the life of the believer. We begin with Augustine’s experience at the baptismal font in Milan, proceed to Thomas Aquinas’ systematization, and end with the influential contributions of Karl Rahner and Louis-Marie Chauvet. We will study the history of sacraments and liturgical celebrations for baptism, eucharist, reconciliation, anointing of sick persons, marriage and priesthood, and pastoral issues that flow from sacramental life.

### **RL 568—Christian Social Justice** (Fr. Thomas Schubeck & Mr. James Menkhaus, meets Thursdays 6:30-9:15)

This course introduces Catholic and Protestant social teachings from within theological and social perspectives. Using the Bible, Christian spirituality, stories, and social-scientific studies, we explore issues such as just and unjust contracts, international trade, the economic situation of women and the poor, care of the earth, disposing of nuclear waste, conscientious objection, and the moral assessment of war and peacemaking.

### **RL 585E—Reading the Apocalypse of John** (Dr. David Barr, visiting Tuohy Chair, meets Wednesdays 6:30-9:15)

The Battle of Armageddon, the Four Horsemen, 666, the Great Prostitute—everyone knows something about the Book of Revelation. It has influenced our music, movies, and politics. Every year or so some would-be prophet announces the end of the world, claiming to base the prediction on the Book of Revelation. So far, at least, they have all been wrong. But what differentiates an erroneous reading from a proper reading? In this course, we will learn the read the Apocalypse intelligently through successive readings: first naively, then as a literary work, then as social critique, then as a historical document, and finally as a living oral performance.

**DON'T FORGET TO MEET WITH YOUR ADVISOR TO DISCUSS COURSE SELECTIONS FOR NEXT SEMESTER!**

### **The Department of Theology and Religious Studies at John Carroll**

Check us out on the web:

[www.jcu.edu/religion](http://www.jcu.edu/religion)

The Department of Theology and Religious Studies, with roots in the Jesuit and Catholic tradition, shares the mission of John Carroll University to reflect the value system of the Gospels. In particular, the Jesuit spirit brings to education a rationality balanced by human affection, an esteem for the individual as a unique person, training in discerning choice, openness to change, and a quest for God’s greater glory in the use of the world’s goods. The department offers courses that span a wide range of theological and religious thought and provide a context for ecumenical dialogue and study.